

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 DHA-02 /073 W
-----300636Z 051937 /11

R 291018Z APR 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0020
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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AMEMBASSY LISBON
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AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION NATO
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 3298

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SP
SUBJECT: CHRUCH-STATE RELATIONS: THE CHURCH AND ELECTIONS

SUMMARY. A NUMBER OF RECENT PRONOUNCEMENTS HAVE RE-EMPHASIZED THE CHURCH'S DESIRE TO REMAIN ABOVE THE PARTISAN POLITICAL BATTLE IN THE COMING JUNE 15 SPANISH ELECTIONS. MOST NOTEWORTHY WAS A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE SPANISH BISHOPS' CONFERENCE. THE CHURCH HAS FOR SOME TIME BEEN STRESSING THE NEED FOR THE FAITHFUL TO EXERCISE THEIR POLITICAL RIGHTS, AND HAS ALSO NOTED THE BASIC INCOMPATIBILITY OF MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY. IT CONTINUES TO PUSH AHEAD FULL STEAM IN THE DRIVE FOR GREATER SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE, AND THE BISHOPS ARE INSISTING ON A STRONG NON-CONFESSIONAL TONE IN THE CURRENT
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NEGOTIATIONS MODIFYING THE 1953 CONCORDAT. END SUMMARY.

1. SOME RECENT PRONOUNCEMENTS FROM CATHOLIC CHURCH SOURCES SEEKING TO RE-EMPHASIZE THE CHURCH'S INDEPENDENCE WITH RESPECT TO POLITICAL PARTIES OR PROGRAMS, HAS FOCUSED ATTENTION ON THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN THE COMING ELECTIONS. MOST NOTEWORTHY WAS THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE EXECUTIVE

COMMITTEE OF THE SPANISH BISHOPS' CONFERENCE FOLLOWING ITS MEETING LAST WEEK. THE COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED ITS DECISION NOT TO PUBLISH ANY NEW GUIDELINES WITH RESPECT TO THE ELECTIONS, THE FEELING BEING THAT THE BISHOPS HAD ADDRESSED THE SUBJECT WITH SUFFICIENT CLARITY ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS. HOWEVER, THE COMMITTEE - FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE FAITHFUL- CHARGED THE EPISCOPAL SECRETARIAT TO REVIEW THE CRITERIA EXPRESSED IN VARIOUS CHURCH STATEMENTS IN RECENT MONTHS (HIGHLIGHTS BELOW).

2. A) ALL SHOULD BE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND VOTE IN THE ELECTIONS. B) NO POLITICAL PROGRAM IS ABLE FULLY AND SATISFACTORILY TO REALIZE THE ESSENTIAL VALUES OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF LIFE. C) NO ONE CAN JUSTLY CLAIM EXCLUSIVELY THE BACKING OF THE CHURCH IN FAVOR OF THEIR POLITICAL VIEWPOINT. WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, THERE IS ROOM FOR DIVERSE POLITICAL OPTIONS. D) AN IMPORTANT CRITERIA WITH RESPECT TO CHOICE OF PARTY OR PROGRAM WOULD RELATE TO ITS COMPATIBILITY WITH THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHINGS. THUS, CHRISTIANS SHOULD ALWAYS SUPPORT SUCH VALUES AS LIBERTY, MORALITY, STABILITY OF THE FAMILY, RIGHT TO LIFE EVEN BEFORE BIRTH, AND FULL RESPECT FOR EVERY PERSON'S RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS. E) BY THE SAME TOKEN, CHRISTIANS SHOULD DENY THEIR SUPPORT TO THOSE PARTIES OR PROGRAMS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THEIR FAITH AS, FOR EXAMPLE, THOSE WHICH DENY HUMAN RIGHTS, THOSE WHICH DENY THE RIGHT OF CHOICE OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES, THOSE WHICH MAKE PROFIT AND COMPETITION THE PRINCIPAL ELEMENT OF THEIR ECONOMIC PROGRAMS, AND WHICH MAKE PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF CONFIDENTIAL

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THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION AN ABSOLUTE RIGHT, WITHOUT THE CORRESPONDING LIMITS AND OBLIGATIONS. F) CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT COLLABORATE WITH THOSE WHO USE VIOLENCE, HATE, AND LIES TO GAIN THEIR ENDS. G) IN AS MUCH AS A POLITICAL PARTY PROGRAM CAN CAMOUFLAGE ITS TRUE INTENT, THE CHRISTIAN VOTER SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT AN INCOMPATIBLE IDEOLOGY OR SET OF INTERESTS COULD BE BEHIND A GIVEN PROGRAM.

3. OTHER PRONOUNCEMENTS ALSO ADDRESSED THE ELECTION ISSUE. BISHOP ELIAS YANES (SECRETARY OF THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE) REAFFIRMED A FEW DAYS AGO ON RADIO VATICAN THAT THE CHURCH WOULD MAINTAIN A POSITION OF INDEPENDENCE WITH RESPECT TO POLITICAL POSITIONS AND THAT NOBODY HAD THE RIGHT TO MONOPOLIZE ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY IN FAVOR OF A POLITICAL PROGRAM IN THE SPANISH ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, HE ALSO CAUTIONED THAT "NOT ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES ARE EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE FOR A CHRISTIAN." THE CARDINAL PRIMATE OF SPAIN, MARCELO GONZALEZ, MADE IT A POINT RECENTLY TO EXPRESS VERY STRONG

RESERVATIONS ABOUT A RELATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT MARXIST PARTY CALLED CHRISTIANS FOR SOCIALISM, TERMING ITS PROGRAM "IDEOLOGICALLY CONFUSING." THE SPANISH BISHOPS HAVE ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT THE CHURCH'S RADIO OUTLET, COPE (RADIO POPULAR), WILL NOT ACCEPT POLITICAL PARTY ADVERTISING. HOWEVER, THEY ADDED, COPE WOULD GIVE FULL COVERAGE TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS WITHOUT FAVORING ANY PARTICULAR PARTY. FINALLY, THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE (TAKING ACCOUNT OF REPORTS THAT A NUMBER OF PRIESTS INTENDED TO RUN IN THE ELECTIONS) REASSERTED THAT PRIESTS SHOULD NOT ASSUME POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS NOR RUN FOR PARLIAMENT EXCEPT IN VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WOULD REQUIRE THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE BISHOP AND PERHAPS THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE.

4. LEFTIST SENSATIONALIST DIARIO 16 OF APRIL 25 PUBLISHED A CRITICAL EDITORIAL ENTITLED "THE BISHOPS, AS ALWAYS."
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WITH RATHER STRAINED REASONING, THE PAPER CHARGED THAT "IT IS PERFECTLY CLEAR THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT INDIFFERENT WHETHER ONE OR ANOTHER PARTY WINS...THE CHURCH WILL SUPPORT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND, SIMULTANEOUSLY, PROHIBIT ITS FAITHFUL AND ALL 'RESPONSIBLE' ELECTORS FROM VOTING FOR THE COMMUNISTS." CATHOLIC MODERATE YA WAS QUICK TO REBUT THE ATTACK EDITORIAL ON APRIL 27, AMONG OTHER THINGS SUGGESTING THAT THE BISHOPS WERE QUITE CORRECT IN WARNING THE FAITHFUL TO LOOK CAREFULLY AT PARTY PROGRAMS AND STATING THAT DIARIO 16 MUST HAVE CERTAIN GUILT COMPLEXES WHEN IT REFERS TO EUROCOMMUNISM - A SUBJECT NOT MENTIONED IN THE BISHOPS' COMMUNIQUE.

5. COMMENT: IT IS TRUE THAT THE CHURCH HAS FOR A NUMBER OF MONTHS ISSUED VARIOUS STATEMENTS REGARDING THE DESIRABILITY OF CATHOLICS EXERCISING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS IN BOTH THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ARENAS, AND THE BASIC INCOMPATIBILITY OF MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY. BUT THE CHURCH DOES INTEND TO STAY ABOVE THE PARTISAN POLITICAL BATTLE. IT CONTINUES TO PUSH AHEAD FULL STEAM IN THE DRIVE FOR A CLEARER SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE. IN THE CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS MODIFYING THE 1953 CONCORDAT, THE SPANISH BISHOPS ARE INSISTING ON A STRONG NON-CONFESSIONAL TONE.

6. MSGR. MARTIN PATINO, VICAR GENERAL OF THE MADRID ARCHDIOCESE AND PRINCIPAL ADVISER TO MADRID CARDINAL TARRANCON, COMMENTED AS FOLLOWS TO THE EMBASSY APRIL 28. HE HAD PERSONALLY OPPOSED THE BISHOPS' COMMUNIQUE ON THE ELECTIONS. ONE MUST FACT THE FACT, HE SAID, THAT WHILE THE BISHOPS CAN BE INDEPENDENT, THEY CAN HARDLY BE NEUTRAL - THEY CAN'T LIVE IN ANOTHER WORLD. EATON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
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Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Review Media Identifier:
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2784514
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS: THE CHURCH AND ELECTIONS SUMMARY. A NUMBER OF RECENT PRONOUNCEMENTS HAVE RE-EMPHASIZED THE CHURCH'S DESIRE TO REMAIN ABOVE THE PARTISAN P
TAGS: PINT, SP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f4dbcba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009